THE INVASION OF AMERICA

BY JULIUS W. MULLER

A Narrative-Fact Story Based Authoritatively on the Inexorable Mathematics of War—What Can Be Done to Oppose an Invading Army With Our Actual Present Resources In Regulars, Trained Militia, Untrained Citizens, Coast Defenses, Field Artillery, and All Other Weapons of Defense.

(Continued.)

Keen eyed men of trails and wilderness offered themselves for the signal corps. There were no signal corps supplies. Telegraphers were there, but all the field telegraph outfits that the country had were with the army. Teamsters volunteered, but there was no reserve of army wagons. Men trained in bridge building and engineering were turned away because there was no equipment to fit out sorely needed companies of miners and sappers.

Cavalry was needed urgently, and men who could ride tried to enlist, but there were no mounts for them. Army officers in Texas and New Mexico and Oklahoma were buying, at unheard of prices, rough horses wild from the range, while in Connecticut were regiments of regular cavalry whose troops were only three-quarters filled with either men or horses.

Money, money, money! Men, men, men! It was too late.

In a village north of New Bedford stood a little crowd of farmers, gathered around the general store and listening to the sheriff. He was warning them that they must not attempt to resist the invading troops when they came.

"I know that you—and you," said he, pointing to men as he spoke, "brought arms with you. You'd better give them up to me." "And you an American!" growled one of the men. The sheriff did not retort. He was scarcely past middle age, but there was a great, slow patience in his face that made him look old.

He shook his head and said, "It's only for your own sake."

"Look!" cried a farmer. "Who is coming here?"

The man who was coming was a man on a motorcycle. Man and machine were so coated with dust, were speeding so desperately that even without war in the land one would stare at this flying thing, one would wait with eyes and lips open to learn what startling message it was carrying. Man, roaring motor and their brother pillar of dust crashed by. They had disappeared before the breathless watchers realized that the man had waved an arm at them and had screamed, "Soldiers!"

A farmer ran to his wagon and pulled out a rifle from its hiding place under the wagon seat. "Come on, boys!" he said. "Listen! Listen!" The sheriff shouldered forward. "Men, neighbors, old friends! For God's sake, listen! You have no right to fight!"

"What?" The sheriff's young brother, sturdy, handsome, suddenly ferocious, brought his face close to him. "No right to defend our country? Are you crazy, Jim?"

The patient man shook his head again. "It is against the rules of war." "Then curse the rules of war!" shouted the younger. "Are you a coward?" The sheriff reached out and touched his brother's arm. It was a secret, almost a timid, act. The brother threw off the appealing hand.

"Don't touch me!" He spoke through set teeth. "If you are a coward and traitor may you be damned through all eternity! Again, for the last time, will you fight?"

The sheriff raised his hands dumbly. The men went to their wagons and returned with arms.

"To that stone wall yonder!" said one.

He pointed into a field with a rough stone wall dividing its center 300 or 400 yards from the road. This man was an old hunter, and the others had followed him often. He took command now as a matter of course.

The sheriff watched them flounder through the plowed field. He stood still for a minute. Then he hurried to his house, emerged with a gun and joined the party. Two miles away a squad of ten invading cavalrymen cantered over a ridge and examined the country through their field glasses. They studied the ground foot by foot, almost inch by inch. Satisfied, they trotted toward the village.

CHAPTER X.

Horses and Horses, Bayonets and Bayonets.

AROUND a turn the invading horsemen came on a little knot of women and children, who scurried, screaming, into the ditch. A rider headed off a woman who was carrying a child. He stooped to her from his tall black horse. Laughing, he nodded and said something to her in a foreign language.

Stooping still lower, he snatched the child suddenly and swung it out of the trembling woman's arm. He lifted it and danced it up and down.

He fumbled in his saddle bag and brought out some chocolate, which he fed to the baby. Then he handed it back to the mother, roaring again with laughter at her frightened face. The other riders, laughing also, waved their hands at the group and cantered on.

They entered the village, swiftly examined it, riding through gardens and into alleys, assuring themselves that there was nothing there to mask danger for the troops that were behind them. They passed out of the other end and into the road leading past the plowed field with the stone wall.

It was still and very lonely. There was not a living being in sight throughout all the softly tinted land. On a tree branch that hung over the stone wall a bluebird began to sing with all the power of its little throat.

It brought a hot choking to the throat of a farmer who was lying behind the stone wall just under the bird. Its song had welled out just as he was raising his rifle. But his gray Yankee eye sought the sights, his sinewy brown hand gripped the weapon, and he fired.

He fired and pumped another cartridge into the breech and fired again, so quickly that his second shot had roared out before a cavalryman who had pitched forward with the first bullet through his side had quite toppled from his saddle.

All along the stone wall they fired and pumped their magazines and fired. They were men who had hunted deer in early autumn cover and learned to send bullets driving after them at hot speed on the jump. The big horses and the big men, broad in the open road, were easy targets. But they were not deer. They were men. More than one of the rifle bullets went wild because the marksman's horror shook his hand.

In the road lay two men, lashing in the dust. Down the road went a bleeding horse that screamed. It dragged its rider, smashing his face against the ground. In the field was a soldier trying to balance himself on his saddle, with one hand gripping at his breast, while the other reached out grotesquely as if groping for something to which he might hold.

A farmer behind the wall, unable to endure the sight of the men who were rolling in the road like animals trying to bury their agony, fired at them and made them lie still. "My God!" he said and cried.

The wounded man fell from the saddle and squatted in a queer hunched posture in the field, his head between his knees. It was the cavalryman who had fed the child.

The others scattered and charged toward the wall. Instantly the defenders became cool. Their nerves stopped jumping. These riders, looming big, with swords out and fury in their eyes, ceased to be men. They were killers. The farmers shot as steadily as if they were aiming at deer.

Two riders escaped and galloped headlong down the road back to their forces. The New England men arose from behind the wall and ran across the fields to gain the shelter of a wood lot. Before they could reach it there was a yelling behind them, and a dozen troopers were in the fields, following them desperately.

"To the house!" cried the sheriff. He led the way to an old stone house built in Revolutionary times. The cavalrymen reined up sharply. A glance at the solid little building with window openings as deep as embrasures showed them that it was dangerous. They opened out, remaining carefully out of rifle shot, and surrounded the place where they could watch it from all sides. Then one rode back swiftly.

The watchers sat easy and careless, as if they had been halted during a peaceful practice march. Half an hour passed. The immobility of the soldiers, their passionless watch, was driving the farmers frantic. More than once the old leader had to growl at a man who wanted to fire despite the hopeless distance.

If the tension in the house had lasted much longer some of these men would have rushed out, but there came a great sound from the distance. It might have been thunder rolling far away. It might have been a river in flood.

"They're coming!" said the sheriff's brother. It was hard for him to speak. The defenders were all violently thirsty, and they had not had time to bring water from the well.

They came. Horses, horses, horses! Bayonets, bayonets, bayonets! They came and passed along the road, and more came on.

They did not turn off to attack the house. They did not even turn their heads to look at it. This infuriated the defenders.

Horses, horses, horses! Bayonets, bayonets, bayonets! If the men in the stone house could have seen other roads they would have seen each one so filled with silent, steadily moving columns of men.

A little party of men and horses turned off from the column and entered the field. Before it was within the range of the rifles it wheeled. A shining, glossy little thing pointed at the house. It was field artillery, sleek, beautiful.

The sheriff's brother, carried away by rage, fired and fired. He emptied his magazine at the distant men.

Along the highway the column moved steadily, silently. No soldier checked his foot for so much as an instant at the sound of the shots. Bayonets, bayonets, bayonets! The machine moved on.

It moved on, eyes front, while the captain commanding the cannon snapped an order. It moved on, bayonets twinkling out of sight in front and twinkling past and twinkling into sight from behind, while the little gun tore the April morning.

The stone house spouted clouds of dust and powdering stone. It dissolved. It became a ruin that stared phantom-like through the cloud as if it were looking with horribly expanding eyes at the gun.

If the besieged fired in return the men at the gun did not know it. Their steel beast drowned the farmers' tiny efforts in roar and flame. They passed as a breath. The cavalrymen cantered to the ruin. A half wall was standing, jagged. The rest was a mound of dirt. Under it lay fourteen men of Massachusetts. The sheriff lay there, with his face more patient than ever and his arm around his brother.

The little gun and its horses and men joined the horses and men that were moving northward through New England.

Over the field telegraph wire that unreeled behind the advancing force went the report to the enemy headquarters: "Civilians estimated at about a dozen fired from ambush, killing eight cavalry. Took refuge in building. Annihilated."

It was a perfunctory report telling of a merely perfunctory incident. But the commander in chief, sitting at his ease in headquarters in Providence, stopped smoking for a moment. "See that the news does not spread;" said he. "It might raise the country. Reenforce all patrols and warn them."

He was a quick man. His officers were quick, and his system of communication was quick. But the news sped more quickly still. Over every telephone that was intact, over every telegraph wire that still worked in New England, by bicycle, on horseback, by men running, the story was passed from man to man and village to village.

They were fourteen humble men, unknown beyond their own township, when they crouched behind the stone wall. They were fourteen shining names before the ruins that covered them had ceased smoking. New England, like a blazing forest, was ablaze with wrath and fury.

Vain was it now for cautious men to warn or authorities to command. Men who never in their lives had thought harm to any living thing dashed out with smoldering eyes to fight. Prudent men, who never in their lives had acted on impulse, now acted without a second's pause for reflection. Men who had cared all their lives only for their own little affairs were all drunken now and thought it nothing to fire one shot for their country and die behind a stone wall in the dirt.

In Acushnet an old whaling captain, a prosperous, weighty citizen, emptied his shotgun into a raiding party and was left dead under his forsythias with the golden blossoms from the volley torn shrubs covering him.

(To Be Continued.)

Prudential Assurance Co. of London subscribed $15,500,000 to the new British war loan, the largest application since the announcement of the issue.

Financial